



## NEWS RELEASE

**Chuck Wolfe**

[Chuck.Wolfe@ky.gov](mailto:Chuck.Wolfe@ky.gov)

**Erin Eggen**

[Erin.Eggen@ky.gov](mailto:Erin.Eggen@ky.gov)

Office of Public Affairs

502.564.3419

### **For Immediate Release**

#### **Kentucky begins ‘Blue Lights Across the Bluegrass’ campaign**

*Enforcement effort aims to decrease fatalities and injuries on roadways statewide*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 27, 2012) – In an effort to raise awareness of traffic safety laws and encourage safe driving habits, the Kentucky Office of Highway Safety (KOHS) is partnering with state and local law enforcement on the “Blue Lights Across the Bluegrass” campaign throughout July.

“We are concerned with our current highway fatality numbers,” said Transportation Cabinet Secretary Mike Hancock. “The year started with a reduction, but beginning in May, our fatalities began a dramatic increase.”

There were 356 highway fatalities as of June 27 – 41 more than at the same time last year. Over half of those killed were not wearing seat belts. Twenty-four percent involved a distracted driver, 16 percent involved an impaired driver, and over half of those killed in motorcycle crashes were not wearing a helmet.

“With the lack of winter weather, more people have been traveling our roadways, which might explain the fatality increase,” said KOHS Director Bill Bell. “However, it does not explain why people are not making safe decisions when they get behind the wheel.”

Statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) indicate that seat belts, when worn correctly, reduce the risk of fatalities by 45 percent for front-seat vehicle occupants, and by 60 percent for pickup truck, SUV and minivan occupants. Also according to NHTSA, regular seat belt use is the single most effective way to protect against and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes.

“Seat belts clearly save lives, but unfortunately too many motorists still need a tough reminder of our law,” said Hancock.

While officers will patrol all roadways in their designated city or county, a special emphasis will be placed on the areas where the majority of crashes have occurred.

“Law enforcement will be out in force, citing anyone committing traffic violations,” said Bell. “Whether you drive a car or motorcycle, you must obey the law.”

There were 721 fatalities on Kentucky roadways in 2011, including 576 people in motor vehicles. Of those, 58 percent were not buckled up and 16 percent involved an impaired driver.

#### Total Highway Fatalities

1999	729
2000	823
2001	843
2002	915
2003	931
2004	964
2005	985
2006	913
2007	864
2008	826
2009	791
2010	760
2011	721

###